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Labour Force Status of Families

Explores how families engage with the labour market

Reference period June 2020

Released 16/10/2020

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Key statistics

In 2020:

- There were 7.2 million families, an increase of 1.1 million since 2010
- 1 in 7 families were one parent families (14.2%)
- There were 1.5 million jobless families (21.2%)
- Of the 6.1 million couple families, 1.4% were same-sex couples

What is a family?

A family is defined as two related people who live in the same household. This includes all families such as couples with and without children, including same-sex couples, couples with dependants, single mothers or fathers with children, and siblings living together. At least one person in the family has to be 15 years or over. A household may contain more than one family.

See the [Labour Force Status of Families methodology \(https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/labour-force-status-families-methodology/jun-2020\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/labour-force-status-families-methodology/jun-2020) for more information.

Main features

- For couple families with dependants, joblessness increased 53.5% since 2019
- 11.2% of families with children under 15 were jobless families
- Couple families with both partners employed decreased 1.8% since 2019
- Couple families with dependants where neither parent was employed increased 39.5% since 2019
- 21.3% of couple families with children aged 0-4 years have both parents working full-time
- 70.6% of couple families with children under 15 have mothers who are employed
- 26.3% of couple families with children under 15 have one parent employed

All families

In June 2020 there were 7.2 million families, an increase of 1.1 million (17.2%) since 2010. Of these:

- 6.1 million (84.3%) were couple families
- 1 million (14.2%) were one parent families with 79.3% of these being single mothers
- 112,000 (1.5%) were classified as 'other families', where at least two people were related in some way other than as a couple or as a parent and child (such as adult-age siblings) (Table 1)

3.3 million (45.6%) were families with dependants, of which 80.9% were families with children under 15 (Table 1)

The following flowchart summarises the breakdown of the main family types

► Image

► Description

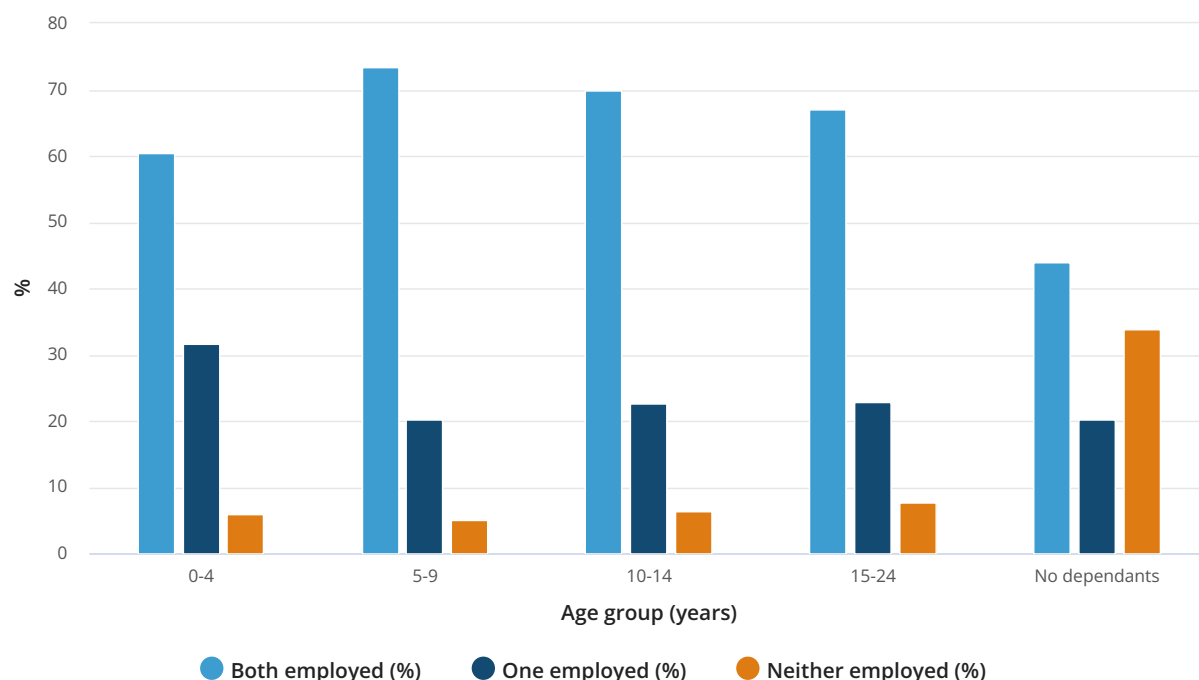
Couple families

Couple families are formed around two people in a couple relationship who both usually reside in the same household. Couple families can be formed around opposite-sex couples or same-sex couples, and they can be with or without dependants (which include children under 15 and dependent students aged 15-24 years).

In June 2020 there were 6.1 million couple families, including:

- 2.6 million opposite-sex couple families with dependants
- 3.5 million couple families without dependants
- 84,000 same-sex couple families, an increase from 29,000 in 2010 and
- 1.7 million couple families with dependants where both parents were employed (Table 1, Table 9)

Couple families by number employed and age of youngest dependant, June 2020



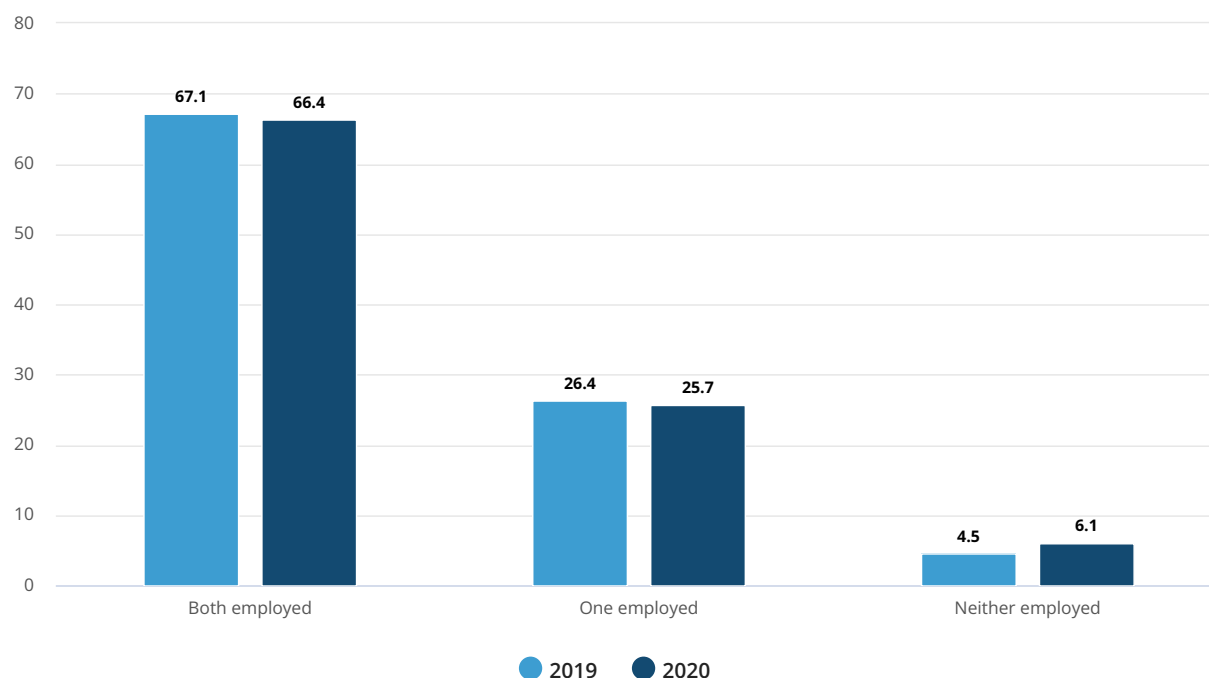
Couple families with dependants

The proportion of couple families with dependants in which one or both parents were employed was 92.1% (2.4 million) in June 2020, down from 93.6% in June 2019. The proportion of couple families where both parents were not employed increased from 4.5% in June 2019 to 6.1% in June 2020 (162,000 families).

The majority (66.4%) of couple families with dependants had both parents employed, of which 1.4 million (81.7%) had at least one child aged under 15 years. (Table 1, Table 3)

There were 477,000 couple families which had a youngest dependant aged 15–24 years living with them. This represented 7.8% of all couple families. (Table 8)

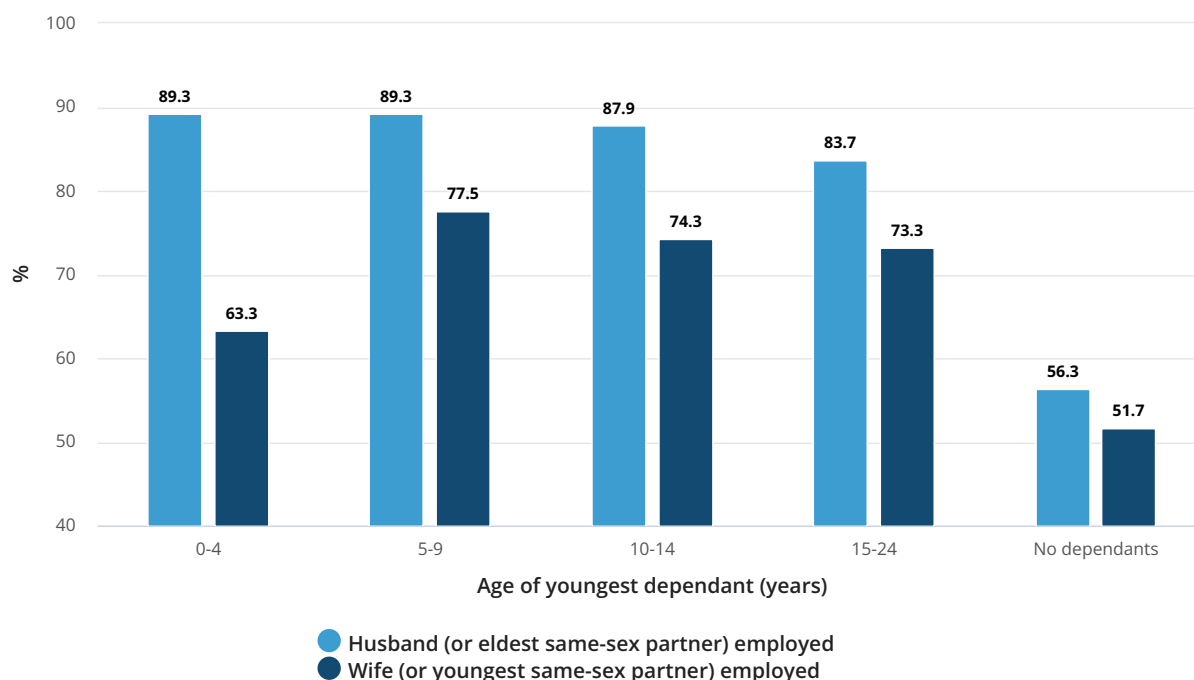
Couple families with dependants by number employed, June 2019 to 2020



In 2020, the proportion of couple families with dependants where the wife (or youngest same-sex partner) was employed was 70.5%. This was lower than the proportion where the husband (or eldest same-sex partner) was employed at 88%.

As the age of youngest dependant increased, the proportion of couple families where the husband (or eldest same-sex partner) was employed fell from 89.3% for children aged 0-4 years to 83.7% for dependants aged 15-24. The proportion of couple families where the wife (or youngest same-sex partner) was employed rose from 63.3% for children aged 0-4 years to 77.5% for children aged 5-9 and dropped to 73.3% for dependants aged 15-24. (Table 9)

Couples families by employment characteristics and age of youngest dependant, June 2020



One parent families

There were 1 million one parent families in June 2020 making up 14.2% of all families. Of these one parent families, 64.8% (663,000) had dependants (including children under 15), which is an increase of 73,000 (12.4%) since 2010. (Table 1)

One parent families with dependants

The vast majority of one parent families with children and dependants were single mother families (81.6%). Of all one parent families with children and dependants, 53.2% had a youngest dependant aged 0–9 years. (Table 1, Table 9)

There were 405,000 one parent families where the parent was employed and had dependants, representing 61.0% of all one parent families with dependants. Of these families:

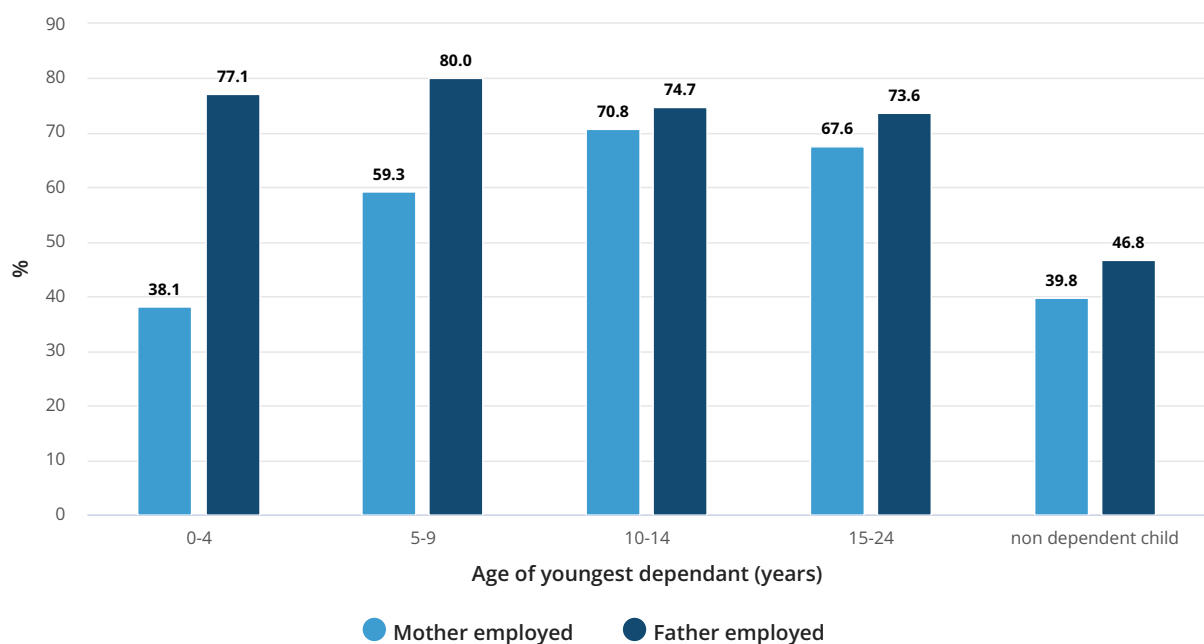
- 77.0% (312,000) had an employed single mother
- 23.0% (93,000) had an employed single father (Table 9)

In one parent families with dependants, 57.6% of single mothers were employed compared with 76.2% of single fathers. (Table 9)

Nearly three-quarters (73.9%) of families with employed single mothers and dependants had mothers aged between 35 and 54 years. (Table 7)

The proportion of one parent families with dependants where the parent was employed generally increased with the age of the youngest dependant. The proportion with an employed parent was lowest when the youngest dependant was under 5 (42.5%) and the highest when the youngest dependant was between 10 and 14 (71.7%). This pattern was more prominent for single mothers. (Table 9)

One parent families by employment characteristics and age of youngest dependant, June 2020



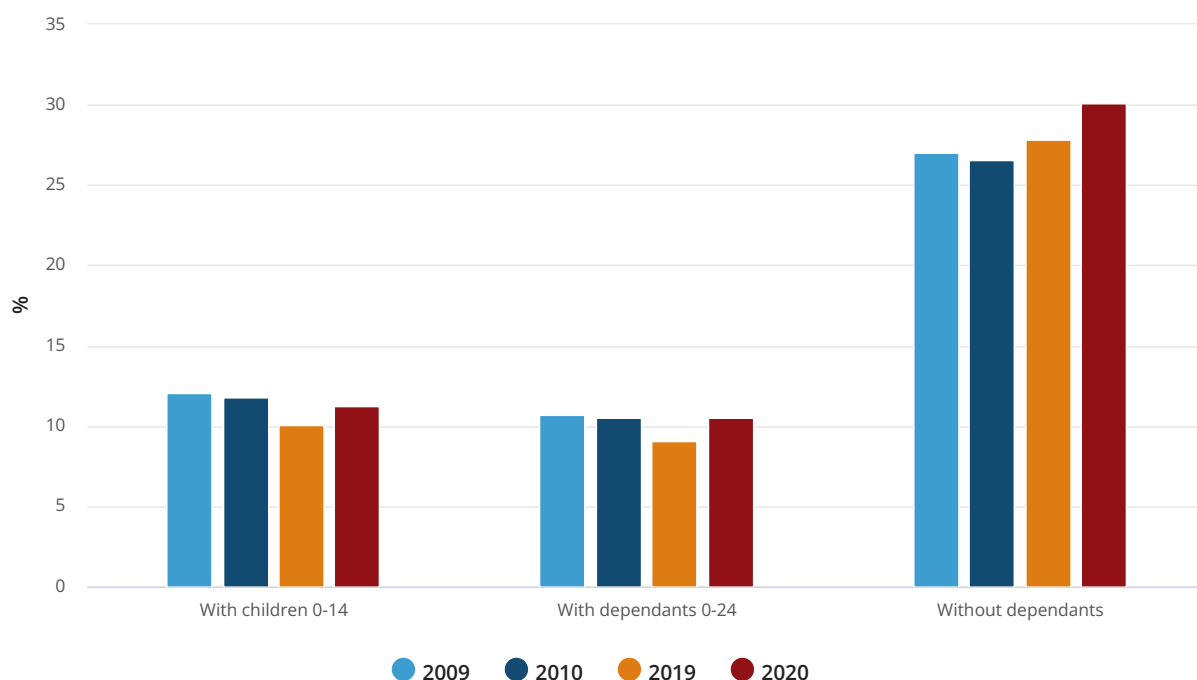
Jobless families

In June 2020 there were 1.5 million jobless families, representing 21.2% of all families, meaning each family member aged over 15 years was unemployed, retired or otherwise not in the labour force. Of these:

- 346,000 jobless families had dependants, representing around 10.5% of all families with dependants
- An estimated 580,000 children aged 0-14 years were living in jobless families (Table 1, Table 4)

The number of jobless families with children under 15 (as a percentage of all families with children under 15) has increased over the year, from 10.0% in 2019 to 11.2% in 2020.

Jobless families by family type, 2009 to 2020



Jobless couple families with dependants

In June 2020, there were 133,000 jobless couple families with dependants (including children under 15 and dependant students aged 15-24 years). 115,000 (86.5%) of these families had children under 15. An estimated 234,000 children aged 0-14 years were in jobless couple

families. (Table 4)

Jobless one parent families with dependants

There were 213,000 jobless one parent families with dependants in June 2020, about one third (32.1%) of all one parent families with dependants. 86.6% of these jobless one parent families had children under 15. This equated to an estimated 348,000 children aged 0-14 years in these families. (Table 1, Table 4)

Jobless families without dependants

In June 2020 there were 1.2 million jobless families without dependants, which represented 30.1% of all families without dependants. Of all jobless families without dependants:

- 1.1 million (90.2%) were couple families
- 116,000 (9.8%) were one parent families (Table 1 and Table 4)

Dependants aged 15-24 years

A person aged 15–24 years is a dependant if they are still attending school or attending a tertiary institution full-time and they live with one or both parents. However, they cannot be a dependant if they have a partner or child of their own who is also usually resident in the household. If that was the case, they would then form their own family within the household.

In June 2019 there were 1.4 million dependants (still attending school or attending a tertiary institution full-time) aged 15-24 years. (Table 5)

Of the 3.3 million families with children or dependants 19.1% (629,000) had a youngest dependant aged between 15–24 years, of which 477,000 (75.8%) were couple families. (Table 9)

Update on families data for 2015-2018

During the quality assurance of the June 2018 families data and the preceding time series, the ABS identified that there was a greater level of variability in the weighted estimates for some of the less common family and household types (particularly multi-family households), and therefore opted to cancel the release to allow further investigation to occur. The subsequent June 2019 publication contained data for 2009, 2014 and 2019 to allow comparisons across time on a consistent basis.

The ABS has identified an issue with some family coding, which is affecting a range of key

family estimates - particularly changes between June 2015 and June 2018. The issue is also impacting, to a lesser extent, on the four "relationship in household" pivot table products (FM1-FM4) in [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed – Electronic Delivery \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6291.0.55.001\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6291.0.55.001) (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001), as well as the Table 01 spreadsheet, which contains estimates by social marital status.

Revised data for the 2015-2018 period was planned to be released as a complete time series in the June 2020 publication, however due to COVID-19, this will now be released at a later date.

Data downloads

Table 1: Family types

[↓ Download XLSX](#)
[47.16 KB]

Table 2: Families by state and territory

[↓ Download XLSX](#)
[47.16 KB]

Table 3: Labour force characteristics of families

[↓ Download XLSX](#)
[63.83 KB]

Table 4: Jobless families and their dependants

[↓ Download XLSX](#)
[69.08 KB]

Table 5: Families by age of dependent children

[↓ Download XLSX](#)
[44.65 KB]

Table 6: Families by number of dependent children

[↓ Download XLSX](#)
[120.89 KB]

Table 7: Families by characteristics of wives, partners and mothers and age of youngest dependent child

[↓ Download XLSX](#)
[241.53 KB]

Table 8: Families by state and territory and age of dependent children

[↓ Download XLSX](#)
[104.55 KB]

Table 9: Families by characteristics of parents and age of youngest dependent

child

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[120.39 KB]

Table 10: Families with no dependent children by characteristics of wives, partners and mothers

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[70.44 KB]

All data cubes

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[862.48 KB]

Previous catalogue number

This release previously used catalogue number 6224.0.55.001.

Methodology

[Labour Force Status of Families methodology, June 2020](#)